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ABSTRACT

Most child abuse has a violent quality. A review of the research on child abusers reveals some interesting psychosocial and historical characteristics. Research has shown violence to be more likely in less stable populations, in persons with poor driving records and histories of severe accidents, and in those who are undereducated and unsuccessful in life. Violent individuals, compared to nonviolent persons, have been found to be more likely to reside in the southern United States and to adhere to a cultural group that advocates physical punishment. These violent individuals often have a history of parental deprivation, post childhood enuresis, cruelty to others as children, hurt self-esteem, and alcohol or sedation abuse. Psychologically abusive parents tend to be depressed, to project their self-hatred to the child, and to have a role reversal with the child. Some forms of child abuse involve infanticide, rejection, sexual abuse, restriction, oppression, and slavery. Parents who sexually abuse their daughters often feel depreciatory to women and are sexually rigid and punitive. Psychologically the abusive parent has phobic ideation, marked ambivalence, unresolved oral aggression, and sado-masochistic conflicts with a breakthrough of sadistic pre-genital material. The quality of the entire parental relationship is more significant than the actual physical abuse, with abandonment being the most serious abuse to the child. Clearly all forms of child abuse are a family affair. (Author/NB)

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QUALITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHILD ABUSING POPULATION

Sander J. Breiner

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Paper presented at the Annual Children's Center Spring Conference, 8th, Detroit, MI, May 7, 1987.

ABSTRACT

Violence is more likely in less stable populations, those with poor driving records, history of severe accidents, not successful in life, undereducated, live in the United States South, and adhere to a cultural group that advocates physical punishment. These individuals had parental deprivation, post childhood enuresis, cruelty to others as children, alcohol/sedation abuse, hurt self esteem, and less likely to be Jewish. Under 1 years of age it is 90% the mother, while over 3 years of age it is usually the father as the prime abuser. Psychologically they are depressed and project their self hatred to the child and have a role reversal with the child. Other forms of child abuse include infanticide, rejection, sexual abuse, restriction, oppression, and slavery. The parents who sexually abuse daughters feel markedly depreciatory to women and are sexually rigid and punitive. Psychologically the child abuser parent has phobic ideation, marked ambivalence, unresolved oral aggression, and sado-masochistic conflicts with a breakthrough of sadistic pre-genital material. The quality of the entire parental relationship is more significant than the actual physical abuse, with abandonment being the most serious abuse to the child. Clearly all forms of child abuse are a family affair.

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Qualities and Characteristics of the Child Abusing Population

Much, but not all human child abuse has a violent quality. Beside actual physical abuse (which includes infanticide) there is abandonment, rejection, sexual abuse, restrictions (restraints, swaddling, food deprivation, limitation of freedom) oppression (depreciations, forced ignorance) and slavery (including premature and/or oppressive work situations).

Psycho-Social Profiles of Violence (1,2,3,4,5,6)

Strauss and Strauss[7] found in their Ceylon studies that the looser the society structure, with less respect for rights and duties, the greater the chance for violence. Porterfield and Filbert[8] reported that those (U.S.) States with low ratings of social awareness and services have a higher homicide rate. Humphrey and Kupferer's study of the Southern United States[9] showed a higher "criminal homicide and assaultive behavior" rate than the rest of the country. They found that those areas of the southeast which had high rates of homicide had higher proportions of black to white, less stable population with more migration, more family disruptions, more economic deprivation, and more disparity between incomes of blacks and whites. They summarized their findings, "combination of socio-economic factors which engender social structured blockage through economic deprivations and family instability tend to more homicidal behavior."

In families in which in which a child is abused (5,6) the parents respond to the child in an unexpected manner. It is as if they wish the child to gratify their dependent needs, a role reversal. The parents have poor self-esteem and disturbed identifications. Any injury to this fragile self-esteem immediately requires a compensatory adaptation, and they tend to project their problems on to the child. These parents are particularly vulnerable to the crying of a helpless child. It is as if

the child that is crying within themselves must be silenced.

The psycho-social and historical characteristics[1] of violent individuals show[6] some interesting elements. 1)They often have a history of dangerous aggressive driving, with repeated traffic violations and serious accidents. Some may become so terrified of their destructive urges that they will be afraid to drive. 2)They may try to act out inappropriate impulses commonly sado-masochistic in type. 3)Their violence decreases with age, 4)They are usually males between 15 to 24 years. 5)During their childhood we see behavior that is not age-appropriate including, a] tantrums, b] explosive behavior, c] cruelty to young children or animals, d] anti-social acts, e] disregard for other's welfare, f] disruptive behavior in class, g] inability to function in school, h] enuresis, and i] acts of setting fires. 6)Violent females are most likely [62%] to act out during the premenstrual period. 7)As children, violent individuals have experienced: a] sensory deprivation, b] lack of affection, c] erratic childhood supervision, d] brutality in physical punishment, e] promiscuity without affection, and f] humiliation. 8)They tend to feel helpless and passive in what is perceived as an oppressive situation. 9)They fail to develop a clear-cut identity. 10)They tend to be loners, with a lack of success in life for which they blame others. 11)Prior to the violence, a] a loved one commonly threatens to leave or becomes interested in someone else, b] the individual experiences a sudden loss of self-esteem, a sense of being "put down," and c] there is an increase in physical and/or psychological symptoms, e.g., impotence, depression. 12)They are usually undereducated with few employable skills. 13)They are sullen, negative, and recalcitrant.

Violent individuals tend to have some of the following social qualities and experiences. 1)He is often from the lower class, the child is told to "hit first, before you are hit." 2)War is glorified in his cultural group. 3)Violence and vi-

olent games and toys are an important part of early childhood values, (by parental presentation). 4)Mothers direct sons to "act like little men." 5)Corporal punishment of children is generally accepted. 6)Living conditions are overcrowded.

Thus, if we are to assemble the best predictors of severe violence, they would be: history of past violence, threats of violence, parental deprivation, enuresis past c..ildhood, cruelty to animals or other children in childhood, barbiturates or alcohol abuse, and threat of loss of self-esteem or love object.

CHILD PHYSICAL ABUSE (10)

The vast majority of children that are abused are under three years of age with a significant clustering under one year. Child neglect is much more pervasive a problem than physical abuse, there being at least twice as many cases of child neglect than abuse.

Emotional, behavioral, or interpersonal problems were greater among the A.D.C. families living in the less materially deprived circumstances. This pattern is more characteristic of white than of black maltreating families. This would tend to indicate that the black families have a greater capacity to deal with the stresses of life than the white families who maltreat their children. The fact that so many black families maltreat their children is not a function of blackness but a function of economic deprivation.(11)

In looking at the religious background, we find that where both parents were Jewish, there is no report of abuse in the NORC Survey.(12) In this study no mother who was Jewish even with a non-Jewish father fatally injured a child.

General Parental Characteristics (1,14,15,16,22)

The great majority were in a relatively stable appearing marriage, but closer examination of the marriage showed it was not on the grounds of a real love relationship that was happy and cooperative; but that it was more often a desperate cl-

inging together of two dependent people with a tremendous fear of loneliness and fear of losing everything. The partners were incompatible, with extensive friction between them.

There was a higher percentage of those who were strong, rigid, authoritarian fundamentalists in their adherence to their beliefs. When the child is under one year of age, it is almost invariably the mother who is the abuser. In a study of 57 children, in 50 instances the mother was the attacker and in only 7 the father.

Psychological Response of Parents (16,17,18,)

The attacker had a history of being significantly depressed. The parents had significant emotional problems, but were not grossly psychotic in the vast majority. Their general attitude about their life was that it was somewhat hopeless.

The psychological characteristics of the child abusers are that they expect and demand a great deal from their infants and children, and this is done prematurely. The child is dealt with as if they're much older than they are. The parent feels very insecure, unsure of being loved, and turns to the child as a source of this reassurance and comfort; a role reversal.(19)

The child is often seen as a hated part of itself that the parent wishes to control or destroy. There also are those parents who are very immature and wish to be babied themselves, resenting the dependent demands of the child. They project most of their difficulty onto the child, feeling the child is the cause of their troubles.

Without exception there is a history of their having been raised in the same style which they expressed in rearing their own children. They were not necessarily severely physically beaten but all had experienced a sense of intense, continuous, demand from their parents. Demand was in the form of being "good" and submissive, "obedient," and never making "mistakes"; and to comfort their parents in their dis-

tress; and to show approval for the parents' actions and behavior even when they are punished. Along with these demands was a constant parental criticism that the child could never do it good enough.

Thus, the child was always seen as inadequate, inept, ineffectual, and unloveable. All the parents who abused their children were deprived emotionally of basic mothering when they were children. Looking at the grandparents, there seems to be great evidence of similar parental attitudes of which they were the recipients.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND STUDIES

It is interesting to note that in all the studies, there generally is not a change or a major breakdown in the caring for the child in other areas. They fed, cleaned and clothed them well. The basic problem is the emotional response of decreased motherliness to the child. There seems to be tension, many disruptions; and often during the act of feeding, cleaning and comforting the child, the mother would become upset and abuse the child.

Both Benedek(13) and Erik Erikson(20) have written about a basic trust in mother. The abusing parents did not have this confidence producing experience in their childhood. They have "lots of good friends," but actually these are acquaintances not real close friends. Their relationships are rather distant and superficial and not very fulfilling. Their life, socially, is relatively limited and isolated despite their many contacts.

The early conscience of the child is developed by responses of the frustrating parent. In those children, who are abused, there is a history that they experience (as well as the history that their parents experienced) being told "no" early after birth: "no" in terms of "do this" and "don't do that," slapping, yanking and making the infant obey, whether it's in feeding, diapering or bathing. They're made to be quiet and lie still by angry tones, blows and yanking. If the infant cries

and doesn't respond to being comforted, the child is responded to as an accuser of the parent -- a threat. Anything may be done then to protect the parent from such a threat.

The early identification with the parent, with the marked ambivalence toward the parent, establishes a conscience that is not only harsh and punitive but also quite ambivalent. This primordial identification with the aggressor that begins in the early months of life is reinforced through the rest of the child's development into it's second and third year of life. It now has a true identification with the aggressor that it cannot escape. The aggression is turned against itself as it grows older, and then re-projected out to the child that it produces. This accounts for the depression, the feelings of inferiority, low self-esteem, and the marked ambivalence. Their earliest memories usually are of fighting between parents, whether this is a true memory or a screen memory. One of the most reprehensible characteristics (in the minds of the abusing parent) is lack of "proper respect for authority"; which, in their opinion, always warrants severe punishment. They use this as righteous justification for their attitude toward their children.

In examining the psycho-sexual development of the parents, we find no fully evolved situation. Their life seems to be on a pre-genitally oriented basis., i.e. pre-three years old. The T.A.T. and the Rorschach Projective Psychological Tests indicate that the parents of the abused child had particular problems in coping with their mothers in reality as well as their own internal representation of their mothers. This, and the depression, are the most outstanding findings. In general, the projective tests show that child abusing parents have basically oral conflicts, depression, a sense of worthlessness, and a poor self-concept.

All studies indicate successive generational disruptions of mothering. Steele and Pollack(16) see the abusing parents investment in the child, in punishing the

child, so that it will change the child's behavior, to not neglect the parent (undoing what happened to them).

Merrill(21) noted three clusters of personality characteristics in the abusing parent. The first category were parents who were burdened with a pervasive, poorly controlled hostility. The second category were rigid and compulsive and lacked warmth. The third category, were parents who were very depressed, unresponsive, appeared very passive and dependent, and competed with the child for the other spouse's attention. A fourth category that is emerging were the abusing fathers who were young, intelligent, had skills, but unable to support their families with the result that the wife had to work and the father stayed home with the children. Their frustration related to their poor self-esteem was taken out violently on the child for "not behaving."

The report of Pollock and Steele covers children under three who were not killed. They believe that the murder of a child is a different category than the other forms of abuse, and when due to a single impulsive act is by people who at that time at least are clearly psychotic. The physical attack on a child to make it behave they see as different than the attack that is intending to kill. They also feel that if abuse begins when the child is four or older, it is different in behavior and form than that of a younger child and has a different type of paternal psychopathology. The attack on the older child they see as much more involved with the developing sexuality of the child. It is not surprising that the parents in this group would be mostly in their 20s. Those who were involved in their religion tended to be rigid and fundamental in their attitude with a strong, rigid, authoritarian quality.

From early infancy, the child is expected to show exemplary behavior and a respectful, submissive attitude to the parental authority and society. Proper re-

spect for parents seems to be an outstanding demand. The child beater requires that their infants exist primarily to satisfy their needs and that the infant's needs can be disregarded.

The parents tend to be isolated in their environment. Many of the parents kept the blinds drawn on the house, even during bright, warm sunny days. It was not uncommon to find in this group, a higher percentage of unlisted phone numbers, with very inadequate reasons for it. There seemed to be more then the usual difficulty in maintaining their automobiles, as well as a high frequency of breakdown of household appliances. One of the "office stories" told in the clinic, was in evaluating possible, potential, abusive parents was that if you go down the street and see a house with the blinds drawn in broad daylight, with two unrepaired cars in the driveway, with the people having an unlisted phone number, the chances are high the inhabitants abused their children.

The mother was in great need of support from the husband. The husband's were found to be needy, dependent themselves, unable to clearly express their own need; and at the same time very demanding and critical and unheeding of the mother's needs. There was poor communication between the abusing parents. Despite the fact that they are very aggressive, hostile and destructive to their own child, they show little aggression and hostility in their relationships outside the home.

Though one parent is usually the perpetrator of the attack on the infant, usually the mother; the other parent, almost invariably contributes in some way, by accepting or even abetting it. In those homes where the child is abused, the mother will approach each task of infant care with three attitudes that are in some conflict with each other: 1)a desire to do something good for the infant; 2)yearning for the infant to respond to it to fulfill the emptiness in the mother's life and bolster her self-esteem; and 3)authoritative, punitive demand for the infant's co-

rrect response and behavior. If the caring task goes well without any problem, an attack on the child will not occur. But, if anything interferes with the success of the parent's care, or increases the parent's feeling of being unloved, the punitive, harsh qualities will likely emerge.

According to Galdston(3)(15) one can look at abused children as part of a continuum of a dysfunction of the normal parenting process. This dysfunction has a continuum from neglect, deprivation, exploitation and abuse. Or it can be seen as four different clinical entities. The first one,"neglect," is where the child is not cared for by the parent; the parent does not give the child any personal value, and the parents pay no attention to it; the child is barely recognized as needing care by the parent. The child is left to it's own devices in a sense, with others raising the children, functioning as parent surrogates. These parents have an inability to perceive, recognize and acknowledge their child as belonging to them, in any particular close relationship.

The second category, that of "deprivation" of the child, in which the parents do not value the child as human; they acknowledge the child as theirs but not as a human thing. This deprived child is usually raised in accordance with some bizarre ideas of how to toilet train, or care for the child in some particular way, such as rubbing the child's face in its feces, as some toilet train a dog. Educational methods may be instituted with a ruthless quality not recognizing the child as being a human entity of its own. These parents who deprive their child of a human contact, not a mechanical contact like the first category, have a misperception of their child. They don't recognize it as being a biological issue of them but rather as a vehicle for an idea or to employ in some particular way. Though these parents are not necessarily psychotic in any other area they are psychotic in their relationship to their child. They may even give their child a bizarre non-human name like

"Rover." These parents tend to have major compulsive constraints on their own behavior and tend to be rigid and disturbed in their contact with reality when it comes to the child. In other ways they do not protect their child from dangers having no real awareness of it as a human being.

The third category, that of "exploitation," is where the child is used by the parent to service the parents own needs, deal with the parents own appetites. This exploited child may develop specialized skills or be trained in a certain way. The child may be loved by the parents as human, but only in its bringing value to them. It's usually precociously mature, with some early specialization of some adult quality. They're like caricature of adults. As long as the child behaves in accordance with the parents requirements, this relationship has a stability. However, when the child matures and no longer wishes or wants to serve parental requirements, there begins to be some explosions and disturbances of significant nature.

The fourth category, the physical abuse, is where there is a real physical assault upon a little child by the adult. It differs from corporal punishment in that the punishment not only is inappropriate in amount but also in the time of the child's life, because it cannot comprehend. This type of child abuse shows ambivalence in the parent's attitude toward the child. Between six months and three or four years of age, they will have fresh and old bruises, etc. In addition to this, they will have great physical care, with quite often repeated visits to clinics and to doctors; the child often will be well fed and well dressed. The child is both loved and hated by these parents. The parents have an inability to deal with their ambivalence without resorting to some impulsive discharge of emotions. Their view of the child is exaggerated in both extremes. The child is seen alternately as a saint and a sinner; a most wonderful child and a "monster." Thus, they vacillate rapidly between a highly inflated aspiration for the child and an inappropriate

disappointment and hatred of the child; a roller-coaster parental response. They look to the child to confirm the correctness of their position and the attitude of punishment and discipline becomes obsessionally important to them. These parents also were not on reasonable terms with their parents, either they had totally rejected their parents or were in a conflictual intimate immature tie to them in the present time, while they are abusing their own child. They are also seriously depressed with an ego structure that is susceptible to psychotic disintegration.

Failure To Thrive (22,23)

Failure To Thrive (FTT) is now an established physiological growth disorder in which the child has a weight below the third percentile for its age. The child seems to obtain fewer calories or utilize calories in a poorer way. There is no organic cause, and the etiology is centered on an omission of or disturbance in the parent/child relationship.

The problem is found in 3 to 5% of infants. All the parents denied there is any possibility of an interactional etiology for their child's malnutrition. They said their children had no problems (52%), were "bad" (25%), or were physically ill (23%) in some unknown manner. They denied that their children were not getting enough calories, even after there was extensive recording that could demonstrate this to the parent. The parents who had the most denial believed that the problem didn't exist.

The most characteristic finding of these parents was that there was emotional isolation from the child particularly by the mother. These parents did not readily play with their children, and tended to avoid any physical contact, even when the child was in distress. Clinical observation of the parents saw them as being manipulative and superficial (69%) or were clearly depressed and overwhelmed by their life circumstances (31%).

The mothers of these children showed early childhood disturbances, and poor performances in current day to day activities. They tended to be dependent themselves with a great need to be taken care of. Their thinking was concrete with little planning for the future and a tendency to use mechanisms of denial, isolation, and projection. They tended to be impulsive rather than thinking things through clearly. Their object relations obviously were very limited. Their own identity was poor and thus, they had difficulty identifying in a positive way with their own infants. Their basic quality was the severe underlying depression; they literally lived from day to day. They had little mothering in their own childhood, and in their adolescence had given up any hope of receiving any mothering.

When approached by a male who offered some measure of friendship, or affection (no matter how superficial) intercourse and pregnancy with or without marriage would be common. Usually, the inadequacy of the relationship they have is such that the person they've selected will not be supportive enough; with the birth of a new child they are unable to cope without some external support; then they withdraw into their own depression with an inability to respond to their child. The mother will avoid the infant, pay little attention to him, and give the child very little tactile stimulation (holding, stroking, soothing, cuddling). Her reaction to the child is essentially mechanical.

These parents often have a great need in their adult lives to get approval from their parents, the grandparents of the abused child. Their marital and sexual histories are disturbed. The marriage is a symbiotic relationship that is characterized by a submission (passive/aggressive) and domination (masochistic/sadistic) relationship. Often the abuse of the child is a symptom of something being disrupted in the ordinary "balance of disharmony" in the marital relationship. Not only is there chronic crises in the family unit, but at times of abuse of the child there

usually would be an acute crisis of greater proportions. Also, there are more changes in jobs, finances, and physical moves in families of abused children than the general population.

If one were to describe a typical abusive parent in a single profile, it would be a married mother, 25 to 30, who was abused in her own childhood and lives constantly in a state of marital strife, socially isolated, with financial problems.

These parents take concepts which are part of our society and blow them out of proportion, such as the fantasy of the baby being a bundle of joy and no problems, and the mother as a madonna, and "spare the rod and spoil the child," etc. They carry all of these ideas, which have some element of truth to them (and are culturally accepted) to a bizarre extreme. They tend to join in groups with other people, who support their beliefs particularly those beliefs of strong punishment, and even encourage sadistic acts in a compulsive rigid and self righteous way.

SEXUAL ABUSE (2,25,,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33)

Research has shown that children are at a higher risk of sexual abuse when they live with a step father or mother's boyfriend, rather than with a natural father. There is also evidence that with women becoming more secure and thereby more assertive and less immature and childlike acting in their sexual roles, that those men who have doubts about their own adequacy will feel threatened by a more normal acting female. As a result, they may prefer the passivity and uncritical compliance from a sexual partner who is more childlike; and thereby find a child more attractive as a sexual choice.

The studies of child molesters(26,27,28,31,33,34,) found they were dependent and inadequate individuals with early life histories characterized by conflict, disruption and abandonment, with abuse and exploitation in their childhood.

Panton in 1979 (31,35) did MMPI profiles of incestuous and non-incestuous

child sex offenders. The only difference between the two groups was that the non-incestuous offenders functioned at a lower level of sexual maturity; that is, the non-family child offenders were the most primitive in their psychological reactions.

When a father is particularly conservative, believing strongly in obedient children and the subordination of women, a daughter is more at risk. When he gives her little physical affection, this adds to the risk. The mothers are also important in that those girls who lived without their natural mother were three times more vulnerable to sexual abuse than the average girl. If the mother was emotionally distant or often ill, the girl was at a much higher risk as well. This was not necessarily due to lack of supervision because daughters of mothers who worked were not at a higher risk. It required the other emotional deprivation quality.

Those mothers who were powerless and victims in their own homes to their husbands, produced a higher incidence of girls being sexually abused. The most dangerous parental combination for a daughter is not when both parents are fully educated, but where the father is well educated and the mother is not. Again, it is depreciation of the female that is significant.

Mothers of victimized girls were found to have been more punitive about sexual matters. These mothers would warn, scold, and punish their daughters for even asking questions about masturbating, etc. The girl with a sexually punitive mother was 75% more vulnerable to sexual victimization. This was the second most significant predictor of victimization; the first one was having a stepfather. Thus, not sexually lax but sexually rigid families foster a high risk for sexual exploitation of female children.

A sexual abuse risk factor checklist (SARFC) listed 8 of the independent predictors of sexual victimization. 1)stepfather, 2)ever lived without mother, 3)not close to mother, 4)mother never finished high school, 5)sexually punitive (rigid)

mother, 6)no physical affection from father, 7)income under $10,000, and 8)two friends or less in childhood. Those children with none of these factors present in their background, victimization is essentially absent. Those with 5 of these factors, 2/3 have been victimized. The presence of each additional factor increases a child's vulnerability between 10 and 20%.

Sexual offenders do not seem to be motivated by any sexual interest or desire it's more a power struggle wherein they can dominate the other individual. In pedophilia, (not rape) there is a strong erotic component with a great deal of caressing, touching, etc.; it's not possible until the power aspect of the relationship has been established. Child molesters are childlike themselves in their emotional needs, and have a need to relate to a child emotionally as being on a par with them. They generally have low self-esteem, and feel ineffective in adult relationships. The sexual relationship with the child gives them a sense of power and control that they desperately need. There also seems to be an increase in this activity related to the increase in child pornography; which seems to give legitimacy to this activity.

In a society where there is a lack of social support for mother, such as barriers to women's equality, this abuse is more likely to occur; and the mother who is not close to or protective of her child, or who is dominated or abused by a father will also contribute to the problem. The ideology of the "family sanctity" which prevents any kind of external observance as a limitation of the "family's rights" allows such secret abuse.

If you add to this: 1)a child who is emotionally insecure and deprived and searches for love, 2)a situation of unusual trust between the child and the sexual offender, such as a caretaker or a teacher, plus 3)the situation in society where the child is socially powerless, you have all the ingredients for sexual abuse of a

child. One of the findings of Finkelhor is that it does not matter what the motivation for the sexual abuse is, if the potential offender is inhibited by strong social taboos and restrictions from acting, then abuse is highly unlikely to occur.

BATTERED CHILD (4,16,19,21,36,37,38)

It is interesting to note that the landmark article in the scientific literature that was widely disseminated to the public on the battered child syndrome was published July 7, 1962. Since then, the underlying characteristics and problems that led to the battered child syndrome still have not been dealt with, though the problem is more clearly recognized. Some of the basic findings which are now accepted for the physical abuse of a child are as follows:

"1. Such parents were usually not parented well themselves, often were themselves victims of abuse, are isolated, do not trust others and have unrealistic expectations of children. 2. A child usually exhibits some behavior which the parent correctly or incorrectly, justifiably or unjustifiably, perceives as aversive, and as requiring some intervention to change.

3. There is a stressful situation or incident that serves as a trigger.

4. The family lives in a culture in which corporal punishment is sanctioned or encouraged."(37)

Using the Moos Family Environment Scale, scores from the parents in 15 physically abusive families were compared with scores from the parents in 15 non-abusive families. The abusive families were less supportive of one another, less free to express their wants and desires, and less likely to have a common positive basis for family interaction than were non-abusive families. Abusive families were found to be more likely to express anger and aggression, more rigid in rule making and the structuring of family activities, and more likely to be arranged in a hierarchical manner than non-abusive families.(14)

PSYCHODYNAMICS

In an interesting study by Galdston,(3,15) done between 1968 and 1978, he observed 175 families with many children, who had 100 who were physically abused by a serious physical assault from an adult. He found though an abused child may cringe when their parents approach, they will cry and cling anxiously to them when they try to leave. This kind of physical abuse, he sees lying half way between suicide and homicide. The abusing parent has a real personal involvement with the child, feeling that the child is actually them. They accuse the infant of crying deliberately to interrupt their sleep; that the toddler tries maliciously to get into trouble, etc. There is an intense identification of part of themselves with their child.

Child abuse is found to be a family affair. The same mothers who will be physically abusive to their children will be exemplary foster mothers temporarily caring for other women's children. One of the women of the study was honored as the "Head Start Mother of the Year." It is only when one is mothering one's own child that one is dealing most intimately with hated elements within one's self, projected to the child. Thus, It is rare for child abuse of a small child to be of someone that one is not familiar (identified) with. It requires a domestic relationship.

The parents show enormous ambivalence. They literally create one crisis after the other. Both parents have similar problems, and they form a marriage in which they are locked into each other in this turmoil. There is avoidance and denial that is massive in relationship to themselves, not in any kind of observation of others. They can see identical problems that they're experiencing in other couples and individuals but are completely blind to see it within themselves.

Galdston found four general factors contributing to failure to master the enormous ambivalence which would lead to and perpetuate the violence. First, discontinuity between generations. In none of the families studied was there a good

relationships between the parents and their parents. Either there was a complete end of relationship, or they were locked into a hostile, exploitative struggle.

Second, prevalence of phobic ideation, "Fears, rational, irrational, and combinations of the two, dominated the mental content that these women shared in their group meetings and with their individual case workers." They saw the world in extremes and seized upon every little bit of reality to confirm their fears. They saw themselves as victims. The only safety was seen in the intense clinging together of this violent family unit.

Three, splitting of ambivalence and unmastered oral aggression. The men in the study repeatedly referred to fleeing and in some manner disowning the inner tensions brought on by their ambivalence. This running from something within themselves was established in 1924 by Abraham as being an attempt to deal with unmastered oral aggression. It is also intimately tied up with the craving to get something for nothing.

Studies done before 1965 and confirmed by Galdston[3,15] showed that child abuse is always a sign of a deeply sado-masochistic experience of the abusing parent in relationship to their mate. For example, 10 of the 68 mothers in this study, confided that they had seriously considered the murder of their mate sometime during their relationship. It was not abstract thought, but one they could visualize and plan on realistically in their mind. The women had a predilection for mean men. They clung to these sado-masochistic relationships despite the strongest and best efforts of judges, social workers, etc. to intervene. If they did separate from their mean abusive husbands, the women would find another man equally violent; and if that did not succeed, they would return to live with their mothers.

The men in this study, if they were not able to have a wife to participate with them, in this sado-masochistic dance, would turn to alcohol excess, some vio-

lent crimes, be arrested, go to jail, or even be hospitalized. The child would be used as a non-verbal communicator between the marital partners; and abusing the child was part of this communication. The child became an assistant and victim.

Parents in some ways couldn't directly say "no" to the children, even though they were complaining that the child wouldn't take "no" for an answer. By the same token, they had difficulty saying "yes" to the child. It was difficult being consistent in any area of "no or yes" or in any other area of their relationships, child or marital partner.

Four, personal mythology of ghosts and monsters. "Monster" was a term commonly applied by almost every mother to characterize her child. This did not get removed or modified despite their seeing the child sometimes as being very good, extremely talented, etc. The child is also seen as part of the ghost situation of what they experienced as a child, thus, they are being like their parent was to them. They also felt possessed by forces they could not control, and that nothing to be done about it, a fatalism.

The parents function with a projective identification. They see the child's beginning aggression, (6 to 9 months of age) as being their own aggression and ascribe their's to the child. They equate normal aggression (assertion) with violence, and with their own internal unresolved violent feelings towards their parents. The mothers then will respond to the child's normal aggression as if it is violent and an immediate danger. They don't prohibit the violence of the child, they just punish it.

Reading this material is far from comfortable. Though I have eliminated much of the detail and description of the physical abuse of children, the identification with the child that we all can make causes us to feel some of the pain. What then, is even more difficult to come to terms with is the knowledge that this has been ex-

tant in the world for our entire recorded history into the present. What may be even more difficult to assimilate is that abandonment (real and/or emotional) is more injurious to the child than sexual or physical abuse.(39)

SUMMARY

Violence is more likely in less stable populations, those with poor driving records, history of severe accidents, not successful in life, undereducated, live in the United States South, and adhere to a cultural group that advocates physical punishment. These individuals had parental deprivation, post childhood enuresis, cruelty to others as children, alcohol/sedation abuse, hurt self esteem, and less likely to be Jewish. Under 1 years of age it is 90% the mother, while over 3 years of age it is usually the father as the prime abuser. Psychologically they are depressed and project their self hatred to the child and have a role reversal with the child. Other forms of child abuse include infanticide, rejection, sexual abuse, restriction, oppression, and slavery. The parents who sexually abuse daughters feel markedly depreciatory to women and are sexually rigid and punitive. Psychologically the child abuser parent has phobic ideation, marked ambivalence, unresolved oral aggression, and sado-masochistic conflicts with a breakthrough of sadistic pre-genital material. The quality of the entire parental relationship is more significant than the actual physical abuse, with abandonment being the most serious abuse to the child. Clearly all forms of child abuse are a family affair.

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